

HEALTH DEPARTMENT & BOARD OF HEALTH

Fiscal Year 2012

The mission of the Amherst Board of Health, working through the Health Department, is to promote the health and wellbeing of our community. We fulfill this mission through our core functions: assessment, assurance, promotion, and policy development.

Assurance: ensuring all Amherst residents have the services necessary to maintain or restore good health either by coordinating the delivery of services by other agencies, by policy or regulation development, or by providing services directly.

Assessment: systematically collecting, assembling, analyzing, and making available information regarding the health of the community, including statistics on health status, community health needs, and epidemiological studies of health problems.

Promotion: providing services and educational opportunities that encourage healthy environments and healthy lifestyles.

Policy Development: development and implementation of comprehensive public health policies, regulations and legislation.

The work of the Amherst Health Department is organized into six major areas: Access to Health Care, Infectious Disease Control, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Environmental Health, Health Policy and Emergency Planning and Preparedness.

I. Access to Health Care

Ensuring access to health care for all Amherst residents continues to be a priority for the Health Department. Some of the departmental programs helping to address this concern are Hampshire Health Connect, Casa Latina and “Peace in the Family: a Khmer Community Project.”

Hampshire Health Connect

Hampshire Health Connect (HHC) is a nonprofit organization created by a group of citizens, providers and representatives of local government, businesses, and insurers. HHC aims to link families and individuals who are underinsured or who have no health insurance with insurance programs they may be eligible for, or to medical providers willing to see HHC patients at no charge or on a sliding fee scale. HHC is housed at Cooley Dickinson Hospital.

HHC provides the services of a Latina caseworker, who has been working in the Amherst Health Department offices to enroll all Amherst residents, but especially those whose first language is Spanish, into a health care program. The enactment of Health Care Reform has had a great impact on the work of Hampshire Health Connect. Many who believed they were ineligible for state benefits are now seeking the help of HHC to enroll in the Commonwealth Care Programs. As a result, Amherst residents’ participation in HHC, and the number of Latino clients served by HHC continues to rise. HHC did experience a staff transition beginning November 17, 2011 through the

remainder of FY 12 and was unable to have a representative available at the Bangs Community Center. However, until the transitional period began, 123 Amherst residents were served.

Cambodian Health

The Outreach Worker Lauren Srey continues to work with Khmer Health Advocates of Connecticut to promote self-help, self-education and awareness and access to health services and resources for the Amherst Cambodian community. She provides diabetes education and training, advocates for individuals needing support services and also works with many of the elders to help them become United States citizens. Lauren performed education and assessment of the Cambodian population to promote understanding of blood pressure and BMI measurements, the implications of these screenings and their impact on health.

II. Infectious Disease Control

Controlling the spread of communicable diseases and food-borne illnesses is an important function of the Health Department.

Infectious Disease Surveillance and Control during FY 12 included the following:

- 4 cases of active Tuberculosis (Tb)
- 9 cases of Tb prevention and control
- Three senior flu clinics in conjunction with the Council on Aging: 150 doses of seasonal influenza vaccine administered; 14 doses of Td (tetanus/diphtheria) vaccine and 16 doses of pneumonia vaccine administered.
- Two influenza clinics for Town employees and their families: 320 doses of vaccine administered.
- Two outreach influenza clinics for underserved populations: 25 doses of vaccine administered.
- Monthly immunization clinics

Total: 153

18 years old and <: 127

19 years old and >: 26

The Public Health Nurse provided case management and/or follow up for 65 reportable infectious diseases: Babesiosis: 3; Campylobacteriosis: 8; Cryptosporidiosis: 1; Enterovirus: 1; Giardiasis: 3; GroupB Strep: 1; Haemophilus Influenzae: 1; Anaplasmosis: 3; Influenza: 2; Perussis: 7 Salmonella: 2; Toxoplasmosis: 1; Varicella: 3 ;Viral Meningitis: 2; Hepatitis C: 9; Lyme: 18.

III. Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Programs aimed at promoting health and preventing disease is another important aspect of the Health Department's work. Programs and interventions are targeted to the general public, as well as specific groups at increased health risk due to their particular demographic group, or the consequences of their own behavior, or the behavior of others.

High Risk Groups

- The Health Director and Inspectors work together as a team to address the multi-faceted problem of hoarding via joint inspections including mental health assessments and referrals to social services.
- Town of Amherst Handicapped Permits are available to residents of Amherst who have a temporary or chronic condition that substantially limits their mobility. This permit allows residents to park in handicapped spaces within the Town of Amherst. This permit WILL NOT extend parking privileges beyond Town limits or the area colleges. A permit may be obtained from the Amherst Health Department. A doctor's certificate stating the condition and the expected duration of the disability is required.

IV. Environmental Issues

The Board of Health is required by state statute to perform many pertinent duties relating to the protection of public health, disease control and to advocate sanitary living conditions. The Health Department's inspectional staff consists of two Inspectors: one full-time and one part-time. Their responsibility is to regulate the laws, administer permits and perform inspections of residences and businesses relating to food. This fiscal year, the Department successfully conducted 812 inspections and issued 335 Town permits.

Food Safety

The Health Department inspected 284 food handlers during the 2012 fiscal year. We administer permits for all food handlers encompassing: restaurants, recreational camps, bed and breakfast operations, residential kitchens, college institutions, hotels, motels, retail food stores, schools, mobile food units, temporary events, caterers, bakeries, and frozen food establishments.

The Department's routine inspections and follow-up are crucial to protecting the public health's welfare. The division enforces Chapter X of the State Sanitary Code: Minimum Standard for Food Establishments, 105 CMR 590.000. These state laws allow the Town of Amherst to conduct inspections, issue orders and suspend or revoke permits where necessary.

Health Department staff works collaboratively with local restaurants to ensure compliance with the Federal Food Code. The code requires all restaurants to have a person in charge (PIC) who has knowledge of food-borne disease prevention and application of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles. Inspectors continue to monitor food managers to ensure obtainment of their Food Manager Certification and to develop a food protection program.

Body Art Establishments

There are two Body Art Establishments and 5 licensed practitioners in Amherst. The inspectors conducted 2 inspections.

Swimming Pools

No person shall operate or maintain any swimming, wading or special purpose pool without obtaining a permit from the Health Department. The permit shall be subject to the requirements of 105 CMR 435.00 and to any regulations as may be adopted by the Board of Health,

provided, however, that said local Board of Health regulations shall not be applicable to a state owned or operated swimming, wading or special purpose pool. The Health Department issued 18 swimming pool permits, and conducted 31 inspections.

Recreational Camps

We continue to perform extensive monitoring and inspections to sustain quality and assurance of compliance. This fiscal year there were 25 recreational camps. The total number of inspections conducted for recreational camps is 40.

Throughout the year we receive new information from the Community Sanitation Program. The Department makes every effort to forward the new material and information to all of our camp operators in a timely manner and these packets are now made available online.

Housing

The Health Department responds to nuisance and housing complaints and enforces Chapter II of the State Sanitary Code: Minimum Standards of Fitness for Human Habitation, M.G.L. c.111, ss. 127A and 127B: 105 CMR 410.000. Upon request or upon the Department's initiative the Health Department can certify violations, issue orders, hold hearings, grant variances and institute court proceedings if needed to enforce orders. This fiscal year the Inspectors conducted 99 inspections including fraternities, sororities and voucher program related issues.

M.G.L. c.111, s.122, allows the Health Department to investigate nuisances which in the Board's opinion may be injurious to the public health. The Health Department may destroy, prevent or remove such nuisances and make regulations relative to these issues. There were 47 nuisance complaints mostly involving trash. All nuisance complaints were addressed and abated.

As part of the Town's Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative, educational outreach was developed for tenants and landlords pertaining to trash and fire hazards presented by upholstered furniture on porches. Landlord/Tenant Responsibilities presentations were developed and provided in conjunction with U Mass.

Septic System

The Environmental Health Department enforces the State 310 CMR 15.000, Environmental Code, Title 5: Standard requirements for the siting, construction, inspection, upgrade, expansion of on-site sewage treatment, for the transport and disposal of septage. This fiscal year the Inspectors conducted 28 percolation tests and 18 septic system finals. Beginning in 2008, the Health Department requires a Title V witness fee to be paid to the Town of \$200.00. In FY 12, the Inspectors conducted 41 Title V inspections.

Septage and Garbage

The Health Department enforces Title V of the State Environmental Code; Minimum Requirements for the Subsurface Disposal of Sewage, 310 CMR 15.00. We've issued 16 permits for the removal or transportation of garbage and offal this fiscal year.

V. Emergency Preparedness

The Health Department continues to develop a group of medical and non-medical volunteers through the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Program. There are currently 30 members on the Amherst MRC roster. The Amherst MRC has held training sessions since the fall of 2004. The group is trained in the National Incident Management System (NIMS), Emergency Dispensing Site (EDS) operations, Shelter Operations, and other public health emergency and disaster preparedness-related topics. Health Department staff is involved in several local preparedness organizations such as the Hampshire Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coalition and Five College Public Safety Emergency Preparedness.

VI. Health Policy and Planning

During FY 12, the Board of Health was comprised of the following members: David Ahlfeld, Chair, Jennifer Brown, Maria Bulzacchelli, Nancy Gilbert, David Kaufman, MD, and Ilana Schmitt, MD. Dr. Kaufman resigned from his position mid-year and Ilana Schmitt, MD was appointed to fill the vacated seat. The Board of Health, under Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) as well as state and local regulations, is responsible for setting, composing and enforcing policies and regulations which promote and protect the public health of Amherst residents and visitors.

The Board of Health reviewed and approved amendments to the *Amherst Board of Health Regulations Governing The Licensing Of Wood Burning Device Operators*. The Board of Health is committed to educating wood burning device operators in proper burning techniques in an effort to encourage greater burning efficiency, safety, and fewer nuisances. The Board of Health also reviewed and approved amendments to the *Amherst Board of Health Regulations Governing Emissions From Solid Fuel Burning Devices* intended to govern the opacity of smoke emissions from wood burning stoves and similar solid fuel devices. Both amended regulations are currently being reviewed, as required, by the Department of Environmental Protection.

The Board of Health also began discussions to explore amendments to the *Amherst Regulations for Body Art Establishments*. The Board of Health is considering amending the current body art regulation to prohibit body piercing, with the exception of ear lobes, for those patrons under age 14 years; as well as prohibit tongue piercing for those patrons under age 18 years.

FY 12 Board of Health

David Ahlfeld, Chair

Jennifer Brown

Maria Bulzacchelli

Nancy Gilbert

David Kaufman, MD (resigned: 12/2011)

Ilana Schmitt, MD (appointed: 1/2012)